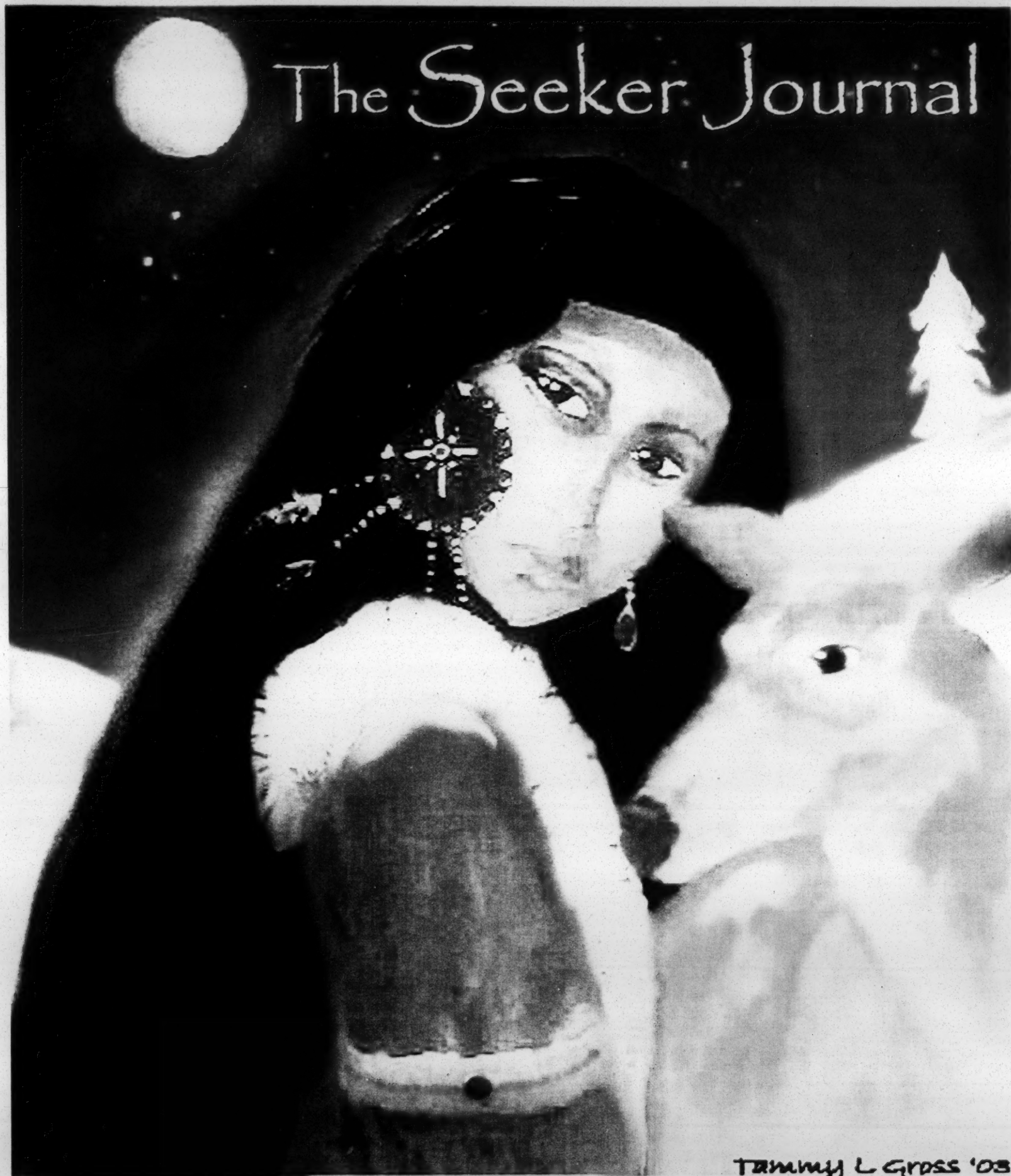


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TAMMIE L. GROSS '03'

☾☾ Editorial: Our World of Myths ☾☾ Pagan Clergy: to Pay or Not to Pay ☾☾
☾☾ Catalyst Point: Faith-Based Reality ☾☾ A Priest by Any Other Name ☾☾
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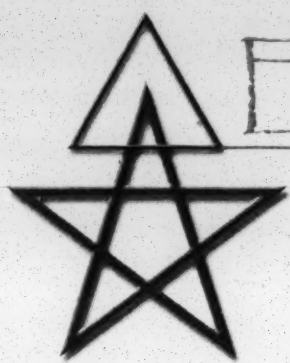


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Editorial

by John M. Morris PhD

Our World of Myths



When I was growing up, I heard tales of a pair of my great-great uncles, who were secretaries to Madame Blavatsky, the charismatic founder of the Theosophical movement. These two were clearly endowed with strange powers, such as the power of invisibility, or the power to summon supernatural spirits.

As a kid, I always wanted to learn similar ways of working magic. Although I had a set of magician's tools, they weren't the same thing – they were just ways of fooling a naïve audience. A *very* naïve audience. I wanted something more, something that wasn't just trickery.

That's why I loved such books as a paperback, called (I think) *Prophecies of the Great Pyramid*, which clearly showed that the ancient Egyptians could foresee the future, describing our Great War, and other events to come. Unfortunately, the prophecies ended around 1950, suggesting that the world was about to come to an end. I've sometimes thought that the Egyptians were right; but I still wanted the magical ability to foresee the future, and to do all the other things that real magicians do.

Like Merlin, in *The Sword in the Stone*, using magic to see the future, or like Mickey Mouse, in *Fantasia*, who waves his wand and lets the enchanted mops do all the work. Merlin and Mickey Mouse were my role models.

The New Encyclopedia of the Occult, briefly reviewed elsewhere in this issue, has reawakened my old fascination with the hidden powers that we can find in this world of secular science. After all, our current view of the world has been with us only since 1637, when Descartes published his *Discourse on Method*. He pictures two

sharply divided worlds, the material and the spiritual, which interact in ways that he could not explain. In the years that followed, it was the materialist vision of the world, where everything was localized in space and time, which became the scientific paradigm. And who can argue with science?

A lot of us do. My own materialist worldview fell to pieces several years ago, after a wedding service that I'd conducted at one of the churches here in Ann Arbor. It came to an end, the happy couple went off on their trip to Hawaii, and I came back home. My only further duty was to mail copies of the wedding certificate to the local official, and I was done. Except that I wasn't. The certificate had disappeared. I had to find it, or I'd be in *big trouble*. I searched around the church. I looked in my car. I looked around my house. No certificate. I had no idea what the punishment would be for losing it, but I didn't want to find out. So I went to bed and tried to sleep, mostly tossing and turning. It was about three in the morning when I had my dream. In it, I saw the certificate lying in the gutter, near where I'd parked my car. Of course, I was excited about this mystic vision, and when it was light enough to see, I drove back to the church. Where was the certificate? I was about to go home when I saw a white envelope in the gutter, just as it had appeared in the dream. The dream had come true.

A few months later, my late wife Phyllis was teaching down at Oberlin College, and I was home alone, 120 miles away. It was early in the morning, too early to get out of bed, and I decided that it would be fun to send my astral body, or whatever, down to visit her. No great message to impart – I just wanted to say "hello." That evening, I got a rather frantic phone call from her. "John, John, are you all right? I heard your voice calling to me this morning."

No spectacular revelations of the future, no mystic entities hopping around the bedroom, just these rather simple incidents, which were enough to shatter the simple skepticism I'd learned in philosophy classes.

But there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy.

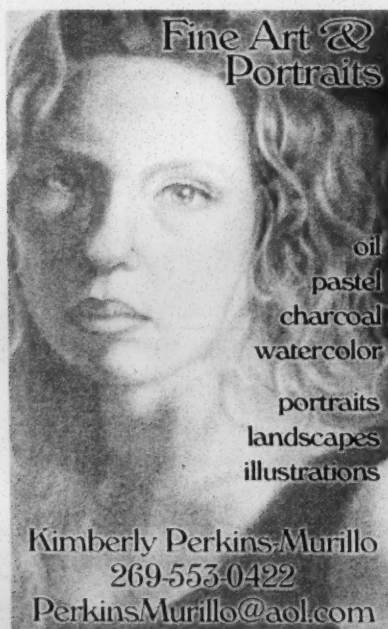
What was fascinating about the *New Encyclopedia* was the enormous range of ghosts, goblins, and

a thousand other entities that are surrounding us in our supposedly secular, mechanical world, the world in which we are nothing but ghosts in a machine - in Gilbert Ryle's immortal description of Descartes' metaphysic.

It was in this ghost-less, mechanical universe that I spent many years, working with the humanist movement. Essentially, the humanist movement was an attempt to build a religion, or a philosophy, in which there were no gods, no soul, no immortality, none of the trappings of conventional religions, but more suitable for a scientific society. Still, as the articles in the *New Encyclopedia* make clear, this is not the way that humans actually live. To call this mechanical world "humanist" is to miss what makes us human - our ability to love, to live on future hopes, to be filled with emotional energy, to despair, to do everything a machine can't do.

And this is where the occultists have it right. Not in fanciful tales of otherworldly space aliens, not in weird cults that promise salvation without effort, but in the recognition that we live in a world full of promises, and to see that it is our manifest destiny to help fulfill those promises.

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Child Development and The Elements



Can you feel it? Can you sense it?

The elements are so vibrant this time of year in the Northern climes. They are not the accommodating friends we welcome into our circle in spring. They don't quietly go about their business doing the Divine's work.

Wind isn't embracing us as a gentle breeze as it did in summer. It is biting and whipping and energetic. Mother Earth isn't soft and green as she is in springtime. She is firm and cold above while protecting life within Her womb. Air isn't something we take for granted as it warmly enters and leaves our lungs. It reminds us of its presence with each breath we take as it dares us to take another. Fire's warmth isn't something we feel with the noonday sun. It welcomes us immediately as we come home, cocooning us and soothing us as we rest. Water doesn't just fall upon us as a refreshing shower. It's icy fingers of frozen water and hail pellet us from above and freeze into beautiful, but potentially dangerous, snowflakes.

I have had a specific purpose in writing these articles. My mission is to encourage you to think about how our children can share in the wonders and joys of our religion, to include them.

No one can tell you exactly what to teach your children. Only a parent can decide what they want their child to know and what things are appropriate to teach them.

You cannot, and should not, be told what to say to your child. Only a parent knows what their

child is capable of understanding at any given age.

I cannot tell you when you should begin teaching your child. Only a parent knows the circumstances of their lives and what path they wish to share.

I wish only to spark your imagination and ignite the possibilities within. There are numerous books on child development that show at what age a child can do which task. The problem with those charts is that your child's capabilities may fall below or above the age designation of comprehension skills. So, take it all with a grain of salt. If you have any concerns about your child's development, ask your doctor. Each child is different and may begin or end a developmental stage at varying ages. However, development is sequential and most children fall basically within these guidelines.

It is a time for us to take stock of our lives and go within to explore who we are and who we want to be. But, to me, it is also a time of year that enhances our senses and challenges us to be better than we are.

It also offers parents a glorious opportunity to help our children explore, not only the world around them, but also the world within them.

In general, babies to eight months use sound to connect to and learn about the world. They use their voice to communicate when they cry or laugh, coo or babble. Sing to them, read to them, and move their bodies to the rhythms of sound. Chants are excellent to sing to babies. Sing chants such as "She Changes" or the "Goddess Chant" as you rock them to sleep or when you are bathing them. It will soothe and calm them. Chants such as "Air I Am" and "Earth My Body" can be as a teaching tool to introduce the elements into our children's lives.

From eight to twelve months, babies can say simple sounds such as Da Da. They are beginning to look at picture books and enjoy turning pages. Why not read books about the elements? "Come Play With Me" is a picture book about a child asking for playmates and eventually is joined by animals.

Children at this age learn about the world by taste. Everything goes into their mouths. They become alert on outdoor walks. Everything in-

terests them. Use this natural curiosity to help them discover the world around them. Bundle them up and go for a walk. When my children were young, I took them out for a daily walk, or stroller ride, unless the weather prohibited it. They were hardly ever sick. Contrary to some beliefs, it isn't the cold weather that makes you sick. Germs do that. In my opinion, all that fresh air was very healthy for them.

At about twelve to eighteen months, babies begin to say their first words. They babble in long sentences and respond to picture books. They know their names and will respond to requests. As any parent of a toddler can tell you, they move all the time. They like to carry their toys around in their arms and even if they don't play with them, touching them gives comfort. Why not let them hold something special during circle or while you are preparing for one?

They tend to gaze at the world as if in wonder at it all. Stimulate their senses by making paper fans and letting them feel air upon their faces. Blow bubbles in the bath and allow them time to play in the warm water. Teach them what is safe hot (sunshine, warm blanket, your hug) and what is unsafe hot (stove, fire, candle flame). Make a sensory board. Attach pieces of fabrics or objects from nature of varying textures (soft, furry, silky, rough, etc.) and let them touch what Mother Earth gives us.

Toddlers of eighteen to twenty-four months, put two or more words together. They can communicate needs such as, "Me up" or "Want juice". They can mimic adults and love to draw. Let them draw pictures of the things associated with the elements and display them at the appropriate quarters, around their playroom or around their bedroom.

They are learning language at an astonishing rate. Children this age are beginning to use their pincher grip. They can grasp objects with their thumb and pointer fingers. By this age, they can help collect items from outside for a nature collage. Make four, one for each element.

By twenty-four to thirty-six months, children love to sit and listen to stories and to "follow along". Their writing looks more like writing and less like scribbling. They are becoming autonomous and are learning about the power they hold with the word "NO". Children at this

age explore their world by asking "why" questions. Encourage their questions. Be patient with their "whys" and use this opportunity to explain the importance of such things as snow on hidden seeds and the effects of cold on the thickness of animal fur.

Children at this age can recognize familiar faces in photos and love to copy the actions of adults. Let them mimic you as you interact with the elements in circle. Children at this age can draw things associated with each element. Have them make their own coloring book. Why not give them a sketchbook and a pencil. First, let them draw what they might find in the water, on the ground, in the sky, and things that are hot. Then, let them use the coloring book they made when traveling in the car or when they can't go outside to play.

Preschoolers from about 3 to 4 years old like to tell others what to do and begin to arrange their world to their liking. They role-play and retell stories. Read Native American nature stories to them and let them retell each along with drawings they make. I really like the book, "Keepers of the Animals" by Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac.

Children can draw shapes at this age. Shape drawing is a precursor to adult writing. Many can learn to write their names and simple words. They can create stories and enjoy stories from fiction to nonfiction. They love to hear sing-song stories and poems. Children at this age can now sing the rhymes you sang to them from infancy. Their fine motor control is advancing and they can now use scissors, string beads, etc. Help them cut snowflakes to put on the window. Make paper candles. Use colored plastic wrap for the flame or as the inside of the candle. When the sun shines through the window it looks like stained glass.

Children, from four to five years old, understand that pictures represent real things in their lives. They can understand that written words are symbols for real things. Now, they can "write" their own stories and enjoy "reading" them to anyone who listens. Encourage them to "write" a book about each element. Lace pages together and have them draw a series of pictures about fire. To help them learn to read, have them use repetitive language in their story. For example, the first page may be drawings of fire

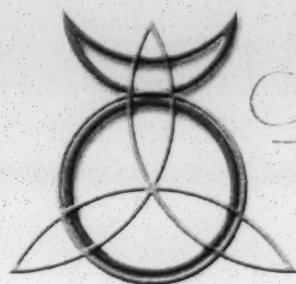
with the caption, "Fire is red". The next picture might be the stove with the caption, "Fire is hot," etc. Have them read it to you at bedtime.

At ages five to seven years old, children are gaining control over their lives and their communications. They can verbalize more effectively and enjoy computers. Their grasp of written and oral communication is increasing and their drawings are more accurate representations of what can be seen in the world. They definitely have opinions. They can make up stories about pictures and can understand opposites. Let them fold a piece of drawing paper in fours. In each section, children can draw an element in winter. On the back, the elements in summer. They can write printed words and can begin to tell time. They are beginning to understand the relationships between objects and happenings.

By the age of eight to nine years, children can write stories. They have acquired all forms of speech and can read with ease. They have developed a wide range of interests. Let them write explanation stories about the why questions they had when they were younger. Encourage them to use their imagination to write stories about why the sun sets with color or why the trees sleep all winter. Let them write about what air is whispering in your ear or what snowflakes say to each other as they fall through the winter sky.

In later articles we will look at the developmental abilities of children ten years and older and how we, as parents, can encourage age appropriate activities to help our children learn about our religion and the world around them. Each year brings unique discoveries and joyous happenings. Each year is a gift from the Gods. At any time of year the elements bring excitement and learning opportunities. Connect with the elements in winter yourself. Embrace the winter wind and setting sun. Look for animal tracks in the snow. Honor the elements yourself and your child within can't help but come out and play with the child in your life.

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Catalyst Point

by Cathie Steinamp

Faith-Based Reality

On November 26, the director of the White House Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives (Jim Towey) participated in an online forum called "Ask the White House". I was surprised to learn that the following Q & A was



included:

Colby, from Centralia MO writes:

Do you feel that Pagan faith based groups should be given the same considerations as any other group that seeks aid?

Jim Towey:

I haven't run into a pagan faith-based group yet, much less a pagan group that cares for the poor! Once you make it clear to any applicant that public money must go to public purposes and can't be used to promote ideology, the fringe groups lose interest. Helping the poor is tough work and only those with loving hearts seem drawn to it.

No, I wasn't surprised by the answer; I was surprised that the question made it through whatever screening process they had, and that it was answered and posted on the White House web site. I would expect such a question would be ignored. I suppose I shouldn't be too surprised, considering it was a well written piece of propaganda that didn't commit to anything-- notice that he didn't even definitively state that Pagan Faith-Based groups would not be eligible for such funds. Instead he skirted the issue and made several non-flattering implications about Pagans, leaving no doubt that the answer was "no" but not saying anything that can be specifically challenged.

Ask yourself-- how does this make you feel? Are you insulted? Well, that's understandable. Offended? Again, we were slurred. But were we actually discriminated against?

No.

We're not eligible for that money because, in short, we haven't applied for it. If your first thought was "We're entitled to that money," you need to step back and listen to yourself. Why would we be entitled? Because we're Pagan? Not a very convincing argument. Because Christian organizations are eligible? No, not good enough-- Christian organizations applying for this money have to meet certain standards, too. Right now, to my knowledge, we don't have anything that meets those standards.

I should clarify that the Pagan Community does perform charitable work. Every year on Pagan Pride Day, groups all over the country collect food and money for charity. In the last three years, over \$51,000 has been raised and distributed to local, regional, and national charities, and over 74,000 pounds of food has been donated. These donations were not used to "promote ideology," and in some cases were turned over to respected Christian organizations. After 9/11, I saw all sorts of our organizations put the call out for blood donations.

But these are not the kind of things that can be used as a legitimate claim for public funds. Three years ago, I wrote a column proposing that we should try and get some of this money. Specifically, I suggested we should come at them with a truly woman-friendly Family Planning Center (as opposed to a center that plans your family for you). This was more of a rhetorical argument than anything-- I don't know of any Pagan organization that has the resources to put something like that together, and realistically, they're not going to give the money to a group that is not yet providing the services they want subsidized.

It could be argued that this alone tips the balance in favor of Christian organizations, but we have to face the facts-- Christian Organizations do a lot of good. Yes, there are a lot of Christian organizations that use their outreach programs to push their religion on people who need help, but there are still solid Christian organizations out there that are in it for the Work-- providing food, shelter, clothing, education, and even medical assistance to those in need. The Catholic Church, for all the attacks it endures from Pagans and Protestants alike, has a rich history of helping those who need help, regardless of their faith. My wife tells me of a Catholic Family

Planning Center that actually told mothers considering abortions that if they would consent to having the baby, they would provide complete shelter and medical care throughout the pregnancy and, if desired, assist with the adoption. I may not agree with their position on abortion, but, by God (and yes, in this case, I mean Jehovah), they put their money where their mouth is.

What do we have to compare to this?

To my knowledge, we have nothing in place. We're just not there yet, although we're moving in the right direction. There are a lot of opportunities open to us to serve the public while demonstrating (but not pushing) our values, and we've got people laying the groundwork now. To cite just one example, the Delaware Valley Pagan Network has created an excellent list of potential projects on their web site at <http://dvpn.org/Outreach.html>. We've got the spirit, we've got the dreams, but we just don't have the resources in place... yet.

Let's face it; one of the reasons we get huffy about the Faith-Based Initiative is because we don't trust Bush to implement it properly. The fact that the director of the project would make such unflattering statements and implications about us serves only to reinforce our suspicions that this project was created to channel government money into the pockets of the Religious Right.

A more civilized answer would have been "If a Pagan faith-based group met the criteria, they would be eligible." He could even have added "I am not aware of any such groups in existence, though." Instead, he chose to imply that we're grubbing for money to promote our own ideology. This would be a legitimate complaint if it were true, and in fact represents our primary concern about the program.

Mr. Towey is wide open for criticism on this point, but we should be careful how we go about it. If we say we're entitled to the money when we can't meet the requirements that must be in place, we only serve to prove him right.

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Some Thoughts On Pagan Clergy

By SunFell

When I was training for my degrees in Wicca, I was taught that Wicca was a 'religion of clergy'. There were no 'lay' or 'congregational' participants: each was qualified to run their own rituals and Circles, and a blessing from a neophyte with anointing oils still wet on their heads was as valid as the blessing from a many-covened "Queen" High Priestess. I raised an eyebrow at this, but went ahead and continued my studies.

I was given that bit of information 20 years ago, when I made my first contact with Witches who were not authors of the few books available at the time. I was fortunate to be living in an area that had a high enough population density to support several metaphysical stores, groups, and psychic fairs. Being an eager newcomer fresh from the repression of the South, I plunged in.

At that time in our history, there were very few openly Pagan people around. They were the leftover hippies and fortunate ones who had access to the materials not available where I grew up. They were mostly closeted about it, fearing repercussions at work, or with their families. Their interest was genuine, and their motivation was active, despite the risks to their livelihoods, and sometimes their lives. These people truly were 'clergy'- practicing their religion with clarity and depth that today is much diluted.

Why is this? When did Paganism divide into lay 'Sabbat-go-to-Circle' members, and hard-working High Priest/esses? I think the division began when Paganism in all its forms hit the mainstream, and became, if not totally accepted, at least tolerated by the more mundane people. There are still serious students, but they are outnumbered by the curiosity seekers, faddists, and casual dabblers that the information glut of Pagan literature has brought to our feet.

And what of the 'real' clergy? Sadly, we cannot truly claim to have any. Even some of the writers of Pagan books are disputed when this question comes up. Why is this? Our very nature as anarchic, nonconforming, anti-hierarchical sorts have pretty much ruled out any sort of seminary or governing body that oversees Pagan pastoral

credentials. Anyone can read (or write!) a book or three, get a certificate from the Universal Life Church that states that they are a minister (or even a Doctor!) and set themselves up as Lord or Lady Grand High Poobah of Whatchamacallit Coven. And people do.

The trouble begins when a real crisis hits in their circles. Lord/Lady GHP gets their ego caught in the zipper of reality and ham handedly deals with the crisis. Resentments develop, and the circle evaporates faster than a teen romance. Hard feelings and 'Witch wars' are usually the result. The members scatter, muttering that they'll never participate in a coven again. Newbies accumulate, begging for instruction, and the cycle begins again. And will, forever, as we now stand.

Why? The problem is that people who set themselves up as HP/S very rarely have actual pastoral qualifications. They do not know how to dissipate dissention, lead a group constructively, counsel those who are ill, or are in an emotional or spiritual crisis; minister to the dying, conduct weddings/ handfastings, Paganings, or funerals. They have not been trained in the basic psychological requirements of a congregation. And we must now face up to this fact: we are no longer a 'religion of clergy'. We are at the stage now where there are 'lay' members who care nothing about the responsibilities of being a Priest or Priestess. They just want to socialize, raise the energy, visit the Oracles, commune with the God/dess, and have fun every 45 days or so.

They'll be the 90% of the group that'll show up, but won't be part of the planning, setup, running of the rite, or cleanup afterwards. We must acknowledge this change in our status, and deal with it. Paganism is growing up- and we're still in 'short pants' psychologically.

I was fortunate enough to attend the "Between The Worlds" convention last May, where this subject was brought up and discussed at length, sometimes passionately. The presenters of the workshop about Pagan Clergy told the participants that they were 'unpopular' with the Pagan mainstream because of their 'radical' views about Pagan Clergy. I understood why. No one likes having their carefully crafted self-image shattered, which was what happened to me, but in a positive way.

Here we have (or now, perhaps had) a religion whose seminal books told the student that EVERYBODY could be clergy, and you weren't only God/dess, you were instantly qualified to Do Your Own Thing, have your own coven, and lord it over all who came. And many did, and suddenly there were "lord" and "lady" somebody-or-others coming out of the woodwork. And right behind them, the tattered fragments of stepped on egos, resentments, power plays and the inevitable witch wars.

I attended that workshop, and raised my hand when they asked, "Who in here considers themselves a Priest/ess?" Hey, I've been initiated, (all three Wiccan degrees!) had created and run a coven or two, and had taught people- so I was a Priestess, right? I could even call myself a High Priestess.

Wrong. The presenters then ticked off a list of pastoral qualifications and counseling programs that I had never heard of, and had never considered as part of my studies or work. Apparently I was fortunate enough to have had a group of intelligent, stable people to work with in the coven I belonged to (which voluntarily disbanded, being military and overseas). So, I had never dealt with the crises that most pastors and clergy have to deal with on a daily basis with their 'congregations'.

I realized that, although I was highly qualified in the theological, historical, and metaphysical aspects of my path, I was not qualified at all in the pastoral aspects. And, although I enjoyed developing rituals, planning and executing circles and all that, the pastoral aspects (like the 3AM phone call sorts of things) did not appeal to me. At that moment, I made an important adjustment to my mental profile of my Path. I no longer considered myself a 'High Priestess', and although I can conduct my own rituals on my own, and with very satisfying results, I wasn't really a Priestess, either. I was more properly a Magus- operating independently of any coven or circle, and not requiring the social aspect of pastoral qualifications. Being a solitary sort, this felt much more comfortable for me.

But what about those who are 'called' to serve as Pagan clergy in a group setting? How can they best serve their coveners without getting tangled up in the ego/witch war aspects of their practice? First, they should sit down and have a

very frank talk with themselves, and if needed, their significant others. Just like mainstream clergy, the partner of a pastor is often called upon to support the minister in their work. It is important for that partner to realize and accept this early on, or else the would-be Priest/ess is setting themselves up for disaster.

Next, they should examine their actual qualifications and experience. Are they really qualified and tested by outside examinations? Can they be relied upon if a friend has a crisis at 3:30 on a stormy night? Can they conduct themselves in a manner that positively reflects on our various paths? Can they deal with the daily matters of birth, death, and changes that all clergy deal with? And are they fully versed in the tenets of their particular path, and willing to keep up with it? Are they good media contacts? Can they deal with the results of media exposure?

Then, they should seek to take courses in counseling and pastoral duties. They should learn to deal with crises, and learn to recognize when a situation has escalated out of their ability to deal with it- like a psychotic break or a suicidal person. They should become acquainted with the social services in their area, and take any courses that would enhance their ability to deal with various situations. If possible, they should partner with clergy from other faiths, and 'pick their brains' for more pastoral advice and training.

The real problem, and one which will be with us for quite a while yet, is that we do not have our own body to qualify Pagan Clergy. And we quite probably never will, due to the anarchic and eclectic nature of our paths. Unlike our mainstream kindred, we are very diverse in our outlook and beliefs, and any attempt at starting a central body is bound to be met with great resistance.

But we must consider the alternatives. As we now stand, anyone can pick up a book and read it, practice a few rituals and anoint himself or herself Lord/ Lady GHP, and set themselves up as clergy. Some predatory sorts have abused this sacred office, using it to attract unwitting newcomers, relying on their ignorance of our rites to abuse them sexually and psychologically.

If this goes on, it will erode the authority of even the most senior among us. As our numbers grow, we must adapt and change or we will dis-

integrate. Fake and predatory clergy are as big a spiritual danger as fake shamans and healers are. Can we allow this to continue? Perhaps it is time to start a dialogue leading towards a consolidation of credentials and an accrediting body. The Convent of the Goddess and the Aquarian Tabernacle Church have good programs. Perhaps it is time to grow up and realize that we need to have clergy to make clergy. And we should also move towards making the title of 'Lord' or 'Lady' only applicable to those who have qualified as clergy by taking the abovementioned courses in pastoral counseling. After all, there are no Catholic men who are called 'Father' without being priests- this should also apply to our titles.

We are very fortunate to be living in a time that accepts us. But we must clean up our act, or we will become unacceptable before we know it. Properly qualifying our clergy- who are the face we present to the world should be a priority.

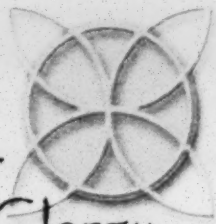
Here is the question you need to ask yourself: If a Christian pastor or priest has a service one day a week, what does he do on the other six days? Do I want to do that? If your answer to this question is "yes", then go get your pastoral credentials. There are Pagans out there that need you badly.

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The Wiccan Case for Unpaid Clergy

by Judy Harrow



"Never accept money for the use of the Art. For money ever smeareth the taker. 'Tis sorcerers and conjurers and priests of the Christians who ever accept money for the use of their arts. And they sell dwale¹, and evil love spells and pardons, so let men escape from their sins. Be not as these. Be not as these. If you accept no money, you will be free from temptation to use the Art for evil causes."

ARDANES #120-121.,
FROM THE GRIMOIRE OF LADY SHEBA



Some of us believe that the culture of Europe suffered a major change at the time of the fall of Crete. As the new way - the way of Dominance - grew increasingly strong,

consciousness of the sacred, living Earth and of the interdependence of all living things faded. For centuries, alienation from Mother Nature grew, but in our own time that tide has peaked and turned. Our participation in what are still the early days of the neo-Pagan renaissance is our great pleasure - but it is also an awe-inspiring privilege. The open heart realizes that the timing of our return is no coincidence.

Mother Earth - and all who depend on Her life, including humans - is in a life-threatening crisis. Perhaps it is She who has called forth Her advocates to work according to their own talents, political, cultural and spiritual, to defend and heal Her. Perhaps human intelligence, individual and collective, senses the threat, and awareness of danger opens us to a long-vanished way of seeing and being. Perhaps those are two different descriptions of the same process.

What is clear is that our care and our work on all levels is desperately needed. We must do it quickly and we must do it well - the survival of all life requires this. But we must also do it very

carefully, because each of us is in many ways the product of the culture of Dominance, formed by that educational system and immersed in that climate most of the time. Old habits manifest easily, especially during crisis. But survival itself requires a deep and basic transformation. The end is created by the means. The attitudes and habits that brought Earth to this crisis can never heal or save Her.

To understand how thoroughgoing a transformation is needed, we need to trace the roots of the hurt. Our present condition is the result of a process of alienation, through which we have lost consciousness of the intrinsic, sacred value of our own work and of our living Earth. Eventually, we came to see things ulteriorly, to evaluate our surroundings and our behavior only by what we can get for them. As this worldview permeates our culture, it becomes "common sense" to value the numbers on a piece of paper more than an old-growth forest or a stable human community.

Let's be very clear about this: ulteriority, not money, corrupts. Money is just a liquid medium of exchange, the easiest form of extrinsic reward, the most convenient ulterior motive. Those who work for any kind of extrinsic compensation, whether that be money or labor or goods, are no longer doing the work for need and love and pleasure. Work done for gain has been removed from the realm of the sacred, literally profaned.

For this reason, all humans withhold from the market place those few things they wish to maintain as ultimately valuable, as sacred. For example, only a few people are willing to sell their sexuality. Few of us would trade family for gain. Most Wiccan traditions simply place ritual practice and religious education within that small category of things we hold too sacred to sell. Our work as priest/esses has been done for love alone: love of each other, love of the Earth, and love of the work itself. By our acts, far more strongly than we ever could by words, we have offered a radical challenge to alienation and ulteriority.

We cannot effectively advocate that which we do not live. We must practice what we preach, before we begin to preach it. Our way of doing things is an integral part of our difference from the mainstream and so of the message we have been called forth to bring. Only by doing things

¹ "Dwale" is a nightshade or a soporific drink made from nightshade.

the Wiccan way, even when inconvenient, can we continue to do things the Wiccan way.

I remember my own time of training in the late 'seventies. Never in those years did any of my several teachers ask for any kind of compensation. Seeing their students grow was their reward, and seeing the contributions their students would make. There is no way I can pay those people back except by continuing the process of community and culture creation, and doing so for love alone. Seeing my students grow, seeing their good work, is my reward. I need and want no other.

But the old consensus against paid clergy is now being questioned. Some of the advocacy of paid clergy is itself ulterior, coming from those who feel themselves too special to be bothered with mundane jobs, and entitled to live off the rest of us. Most Pagans can easily spot and ignore such Pagan scammers. There are, however, others who are sincerely wondering whether paid clergy has not become a painful necessity. They raise three points that are perfectly true. Those of us who want to continue on a voluntary basis need to respond to these concerns. If we settle for unreasoning appeal to Tradition, then we deserve to have our position stigmatized as "the last Pagan taboo."

The more important of these points is the sheer extent of the crisis, in both senses: great danger and great opportunity. The danger to Earth's life is immediate. The increasing numerical growth of the Pagan community may be part of what will save Her. But it takes time, energy and skill to do all that needs to be done. We need it all and we need it now. We see around us religious groups that purchase for themselves the full-time services of religious specialists who can do all these things. It looks real good.

If that's the only way to get the work done, then that's the way we have to do it. But I don't think so. One of the most hopeful signs of our growing maturity as a religion is an accelerating emphasis on skills development within the Craft community. Everywhere priest/esses are creating and exchanging curricula, and requiring demonstrations of skill and work before awarding degrees. The days of elevations in exchange for longevity, flattery, or worse are fading fast, and good riddance to them!

It's well we've been raising our standards. The next step is to broaden our understanding of what constitutes clergy. Until recently, we have understood a priest/ess to be one who conducts Pagan ritual, and little more. In many places, we did not even expect our priest/esses to be able to create rituals for new occasions and needs. As long as rote repetition was considered sufficient, we did not even provide ourselves with fully competent ritual leaders. While people to conduct the rites may be the first thing a religious community needs, our needs go far beyond that.

We need researchers to recover Pagan models from European antiquity and from the contemporary Third World. We need theologians to help us understand how our values, our symbols, stories and practices, and our daily behavior in the world all work together. We need artists of all kinds to create and adapt beautiful expressions of our beliefs that can deeply transform consciousness. We need mentors to prepare the priest/esses of the future, and counselors to help us work through our perplexities and hard times. We need media specialists who can help our neighbors understand us and hear what we are saying. And we probably need a dozen other roles that I am not thinking of right now.

If we are going to forego paid clergy, and still have the clergy services we need and deserve, we must not expect or demand all things from any one person. Each of us has different talents, which we can develop and contribute. If we each concentrate on the part of the work we most enjoy, we are less likely to want extrinsic reward or burn out from the lack of it. We can become aware of who is particularly good at what. We can call on one another's specialties as needed, and offer our own to the whole community. As the web becomes better articulated, we will have created a new form of decentralized clergy, where each person's talents count. We will have realized an old ideal: from each according to her abilities, to each according to her needs.

Think of the Pagans you know. Clearly we already have a great richness of knowledge and skill, and it grows all the time. No priest/ess can draw on that bounty unless s/he has the humility to admit that s/he does not know it all,

and to accept help as a free gift. I remember, for example, when a student of mine got into some trouble because she was relating to an extreme misconception of the Egyptian Goddess, Ma'at. I have next to no knowledge of the religion of Egypt. But I knew of a coven in Boston that works intensively with that pantheon. A call to their HPs provided the information my student needed. That priestess may never need to call on my particular specialties. But if elsewhere in the community her needs are met, and if my talents can be useful to somebody else, direct compensation is not important. We are connected through our commitment to the Earth. Open sharing in love and trust is the way of Partnership.

A second concern that merits attention is how unhappy some of us are with our day jobs. We all need to pay rent and buy groceries. We have to somehow get enough money to meet our material needs. And some of our jobs really are pretty awful. Some of us work for companies that pollute or oppress. Some of us work in stressful circumstances, around unpleasant people. Many more of us have jobs that are "just" boring and irrelevant. Daily misery makes the escape into paid clergy status seem really tempting. In fairness, some of those who would like to be full time Pagan clergy are not so much trying to exploit the rest of us as to achieve a kind of integration in their own lives.

But awful jobs need not be our only options. Some of us have work that is consistent with our deepest values, and yet does not involve selling the Craft. There are Pagan teachers, doctors, librarians, artists. I earn my own living as a workplace safety inspector. I am pleased to think that what I do during the day is potentially lifesaving. Decent day jobs are possible, but finding them requires paying a little creative attention.

We need to make sure that young people who seek training for our priesthood understand that the priesthood is entirely voluntary. We need to encourage them to think seriously about finding an ethically consistent career and to work as hard at their secular education as they do at their Pagan studies. In some places already, Pagans are forming career networks, helping each other to find and do well at appropriate jobs. There are many ways of right livelihood, limited

only by our imagination and our ingenuity.

The last reason I want to respond to is more about the advisability of charging seekers than of paying priest/esses. Money, we are reminded, is this culture's way of keeping score, of describing the value of anything. If we charge for Pagan religious instruction, the money that the student pays us is not available to her for something else. She has made a sacrifice for her beliefs. This will tell her unconscious mind that the information being conveyed is worthwhile, and motivate her to apply herself to the learning. At the same time, the student's willingness to offer a financial sacrifice provides the teacher with an easy and objective test of the student's sincerity and dedication. In this culture's terms, that is all perfectly true. But I thought we were about transformation.

We do not have great numbers, so we do not have great political power in the conventional sense, even though many of us still feel we must do whatever we can on the earth plane or our magic will ring hollow in our own ears. We are a small minority in this culture. If we do things in accordance with this culture's alienating ways, it is the Craft, not the culture that will be transformed. Think about it - aren't we seeing much more slickness, much more hype, much more "star system" than we did ten years ago?

So, enjoy this irony: the fact that money really is this culture's way of keeping score provides us with an elegantly accurate test of the perception and wisdom of our potential students. Can this person appreciate the true value of what is offered entirely as a gift, appreciate it enough to put in the hours and years that will be required to learn it? Paying tuition by itself may get some people credentials, but it never got anybody an education, of any kind, anywhere. The real cost of learning, secular and spiritual alike, is effort: research, study, practice. If s/he can't pay that cost in the total absence of this culture's reinforcers, s/he probably doesn't belong with us.

Yes, we need skilled clergy, right livelihood, and a good, tough screen for potential students. We need everything that the advocates of paid clergy say we need. But we can get all that without accepting the alienation that comes with having paid clergy. I believe that the change to a clergy that is hired and paid would set us on a

path that would quickly and irrevocably destroy our unique nature.

Our first and most obvious difference from the ways of our neighbors is that we practice our religion in small and intimate circles. We take it for granted that, at our rituals, every person can see every other person's face. But this visibility is no small thing, rather it is the basis of our intimate, family-like bond, a sharp contrast to a society in which isolated and rootless individuals compete against each other for status symbols.

A circle small enough for intimacy cannot realistically support their priest/ess. A group large enough to do so cannot fit into most living rooms. The cost of renting a meeting room requires even more contributors, and to own and maintain our own facilities comes even higher. Before long, all we would be seeing is the backs of each others' heads, a mainstream example that I hope we may never emulate. Then - and look at just about any church or synagogue for examples - those who could afford larger contributions would be able to use that leverage to get their way about congregational decisions. And the full time clergy we thought could do so much more for us would instead find much of their time and energy diverted into fund-raising, management and congregational politics. The average Christian or Jewish congregation is a middle-size business; it exists primarily to maintain itself.

In this time, money seems to be an addiction. If we start mixing Craft with money, the money would soon take over. Before long, nothing of what drew us here in the first place would remain. In those massive and impersonal temples, a few pictures and phrases would probably still be recognizable. But that's not good enough for me. Transformative work will hardly come out of places like that. In fact, progressive Christians and Jews all around us are organizing themselves into base communities and chavurot, groups that resemble covens far more than they do churches or synagogues.

They recognize the value of our good, old ways. And so do we. We can and will cherish and guard those ways. And may our Craft preserve the Earth!

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*This is a revised version of an essay that was originally published in the anthology **IMAGES IN THE GLASS** and can now be found at the Proteus web site: <http://www.draknet.com/proteus/>.*

*Judy Harrow is High Priestess of Proteus Coven, Chair of the Pastoral Counseling Program at Cherry Hill Seminary, and President-Elect of the New Jersey Association for Spiritual, Ethical and Religious Values in Counseling. She has written **WICCA COVENS** and **SPIRITUAL MENTORING**, and edited the anthology **DEVOTED TO YOU**. Most recently, Judy coordinated the 50th Anniversary reissue of **WITCHCRAFT TODAY** by Gerald Gardner, which is anticipated for April, 2004.*

Pagan Clergy: to pay, or not to pay

by Diana Rajchel Olsen

One of the biggest problems pagans in my part of the country face involves locating a pagan clergyperson when in need of a spiritual service such as a wedding or a funeral. This happens in part because most pagan religions designate all practitioners part of the priesthood, particularly Wicca. Also, the secretiveness of these practices have yet to fade away, even in the face of a strange popularity of pagan religions.

Pagan clergy are hard to find and hard to keep also because, by the nature of being clergy in any religion, the religion demands time from the person's entire life. Clergy people do not get vacations. Clergy people, like medical people, advocates, and the like, must often sacrifice sleep and time to the needs of others. Clergy people must live as an example to all that know them.

As a Wiccan, I am a member of the priesthood. Above all else, my life must be an example -- I have not attained the highest degree of priesthood in my tradition and I must live under this dictum! I feel often the demands upon me as the only openly ordained Wiccan in my area and I do not even at this point run a coven. I can only imagine what my high priestess goes through.

Clergy is not only a full-time job, it is a whole life job. Although no one becomes a priest or priestess to get rich, perhaps making sure the people who do these jobs are somewhat com-

pensated would help both further establish the credibility of Paganism in the United States and encourage staying power among pagan groups.

I acknowledge the many fears and dangers of a paid clergy: corruption, unnecessary hierarchy, and the risk of going stale. I strongly feel that the benefits of allowing clergy to live on more than dedication outweighs these risks: central locations to network for pagans in the area, easy access to persons who can handle weddings, funerals, baptisms and the like and even more people to represent our causes while defending our rights.

Arguably, pagans do not have much money to spare for such a service, particularly those who operate in covens. This could be resolved by establishing community centers collective to pagans in a set area. A few people supporting one is an expensive process while, oddly, a lot of people supporting three or four representatives is not so. This would also ensure that multiple traditions are represented.

To anchor the growth of the pagan community, it is my belief that at some point paid clergy are needed. There are too many practitioners now to avoid filling this necessity. Never mind that no form of paganism was meant to become popular religion -- it is becoming popular, and paid clergy is one way to deal with this reality.

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Pagan Clergy



I am in my third year of priesthood studies with the Fellowship of Isis. Next Candlemas I will be ordained. I have given a great deal of thought to what my ordination will signify, and at what level I will need to function. I have chosen to seek legal ordination for myself, because I believe I can serve the community better in that way. I can perform legal marriages, and legally visit in Intensive Care Units and jails. It is important in my mind for me to be able to do that. Additionally, I believe it will help me deal with other clergy on an equal footing. In some cases,

credentials are important.

Others in training with me have chosen not to be legally ordained, and I honor their choice. One does counseling on the Internet, another is taking Parish Nurse training at the local Catholic hospital, so that she can bring a healing ministry to the Pagan community. A third is opening a ritual and meeting room in her home. The fourth and fifth minister to the earth, and feel no need of credentials. But for myself, I do.

Can we have different levels of clergy in the Pagan community? We already do. I see no need to change. One of the greatest dangers, I fear, would be to take the route of the Christian and Jewish faiths, and have big buildings, big congregations and a paid clergy. At the present time, I believe the Pagan and Wiccan communities operate in a fashion similar to early Christianity, in small cells where everybody knows everybody, and they care for each other. The Mormons do a good job of providing for their own on a larger scale, but it is still most effective in small groups.

What kind and how much training do Pagan clergy need? Somewhere between none and several years of intense study. If Sam and Sue and a couple of their friends want to get together to honor the Sabbats and Esbats, I think a genuine desire can bestow their priesthood. If, on the other hand, they wish to join a specific tradition, then they will have to fulfill the requirements of that tradition. And if they want to perform legal marriages and be on an equal footing with other clergy, they will have to meet other requirements.

So shouldn't those clergy who are legally ordained be paid clergy? No, no, a thousand times, no. I believe the clergy must be a part of the community, and share its mundane life as well as its spiritual life. A shaman in most cultures has a regular job, as well as his/her spiritual one. One of the biggest mistakes the Catholic Church made was to make its clergy both paid and celibate. Not only aren't they subject to the same financial pressures as their parishioners, they are not subject to the family pressures either. How can they possibly identify with what their constituents are going through during a difficult pregnancy, when their children are having problems in school and any number of other things?

What, then, is the function of the legally ordained in the Pagan/Wiccan community? I see it as three-fold. The first is to liaison with other leaders in the Pagan community. I am fortunate to live in a community that is fairly open, and where Pagans of differing Traditions know each other, and come together to celebrate some Sabbats. We know each other, and what we each have to offer.

The second is to provide the services that are our privilege by virtue of legal ordination, to visit the sick of the community, those in jail, and perform the ceremonies that require legal ordination.

The third function is to liaison with members of the clergy from other faiths. I feel this is of particular importance if we are to avoid another "Burning Times". We will never overcome some of the more rabid fundamentalist beliefs that we are evil, but if other clergy knows us, we may find we have supporters in those communities.

Pagan clergy face a unique set of challenges. We don't have a scripture to help us solve our problems. We have to know how to deal with issues of polyfidelity and homosexuality, and be able to counsel couples in these relationships. Can we do this without a great deal of formal training? Yes, some people just seem to have a gift for it. Others, like myself, need the training. One is not better than the other is.

I also believe we should have both male and female clergy. At this time in many Traditions, females make up a large portion of the clergy. I would encourage men to share this Path. I believe men can relate better to some people and some issues than women can, and vice versa. We need balance in all things.

I sometimes feel I'm a pretender to this priestess role. I have only been in the Pagan community for five years. I do not question my dedication, only my right to be here. But anytime I feel like I'm not doing enough, I should quit, I get a very strong message from the Goddess to continue. I am looking forward to my ordination and finding out where my specific work will lie.

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Silverstar is a third-year priestess candidate with the Fellowship of Isis, Lyceum of Stella Maris. Although she has only been in the formal Pagan community for five years, she has been pagan for much longer. After

leaving the Roman Catholic Church of her childhood at the earliest opportunity, she founded the one-woman Church of God of the Great Outdoors. She just didn't realize it was a church of Goddess. Since joining the Fellowship of Isis, she has written and performed several public rituals, and is in the process of putting together a webpage. She wants to be a Pagan scholar and gadfly when she grows up.

A Priest by Any Other Name

by Lark

Ask any Wiccan whether they need clergy and the first thing you will probably get is the knee-jerk reaction that Wiccans do not require someone to intervene with the Gods for them; they are quite capable of talking to the Goddess directly...thank you very much. I agree completely with that sentiment; however, it is a very limited view. The fact is that when we begin to look at the need for clergy in Wicca, that image of the preacher leading the flock of sheep is not the one we should be looking at.

What does a priest, a rabbi, a minister do when they are not up in front of their congregation leading a worship service? Do they sit home the rest of the week thinking up sermons to deliver? No. They go about doing those other tasks that constitute being clergy. They visit the sick. They counsel those who are to be wed and they perform marriage ceremonies. They comfort the dying and their families. They assist in conflict resolution. They teach religious classes; they raise funds, they participate in all the activities necessary to keep a church, or temple, or mosque, or whatever up and running.

I can see the Wiccan Priests and Priestesses nodding and saying "Yes, I do that". Indeed, there is often little difference between the activities of a High Priest or High Priestess and the clergy of any other faith. In the state in which I live, I can legally perform marriages. If I assume this role, I must take on the role of counselor to make sure that the couple I am to wed has seriously considered the implications and consequences of the vows they will make. Where is the difference between what I do and what the local Protestant minister does in the same situation?

In a coven, the role of clergy generally falls to the High Priest or High Priestess. They are the one that coven members turn to regarding spiritual issues. But what does a solitary do? Where do you turn if you want a Wiccan funeral or legal handfasting? Should we have to settle for civil ceremonies or attendance by other faiths because we have no clergy of our own? Who does a solitary turn to if they have a crisis that requires spiritual guidance from someone who holds their same beliefs? At the moment it is difficult for those outside a coven to access such

help.

In the Tradition in which I trained, we believe that there is a need for Wiccan clergy to provide those spiritual services required by our fellow Wiccans. To that end, we require that all of our Initiates beyond First Degree become proficient in counseling skills, teaching, conflict resolution, and the logistics of running a coven. We require the study of comparative religion, ethics, and personal responsibility. When we nominate someone for Third Degree, we look for the candidate with the life experience and wisdom to guide others, the commitment to the Craft, and the spiritual call to serve the Gods. We also look for the candidate who has always been willing to do the work without asking and without recognition simply because it has to be done. We hold our High Priests and High Priestesses to no less standard than that imposed by any theological seminary.

Furthermore, we expect our Initiates to provide guidance and counseling and other clergy services to others in the local community, not just to their coven members.

The day one becomes a High Priest or High Priestess, one's life is no longer one's own. Coven members and fellow travelers will call upon you at all hours of the day or night. A suicidal covener may land on your doorstep at 1 AM. Someone may become ill and require hospitalization. Someone may die. Someone may have a flat tire and need a ride home. The list is endless. You fit these crises in around the requirements of a mundane life. You stay up late, you neglect housework, you put personal relationships on hold...all to perform the tasks of being clergy.

There is a belief current in the Wiccan community that taking money for any of these activities is somehow to demean our religion. And I ask myself, why? We want our Priests and Priestesses to always be available for us, but we force them to take mundane jobs that take them away from us just when we need them most. Other faiths pay their clergy a living wage just so they can concentrate on the spiritual needs of their community. Do we hold our leaders less worth? Are we so afraid that our Priests and Priestesses would abuse the position if we paid them for the time and help they give to us? And if we are, what does that say about our leaders? I know

there are many groups out there who could not afford to pay to their clergy...and that's fine. Let their Priests and Priestesses continue to work in two worlds if they will, my hat is off to them. But I do think we need to re-examine why we have this attitude that payment for honest work done is dirty.

Will we ever see the advent of Wiccan divinity schools²? Probably not in my lifetime. There are too many obstacles that lie in our way, of which the least may be overcoming the stereotype that we are minions of Satan. The biggest problem may be our stubborn independence and refusal to agree on even a simple set of tenets to define our religion. There's nothing wrong with this outlook. I would certainly make no claim to having found the "one true way". But if we are going to look at running a divinity school equal to that of any of the mainstream religions, we will have to come to some agreement on some basic tenets of faith, and arrive at some objective standards of performance against which preparedness for ordination can be judged. We have a long way to go to reach this point. At present, the best we can do is to keep training our own clergy, or to attend one of those few divinity schools which will let one work in a Wiccan context.

In the meantime, let's get away from seeing 'paid clergy' as a dirty word and look at it as a job description for all those things that we do to minister to the spiritual needs of others. Be you covener or solitary, if this is your calling then you are to be honored, for to be chosen by the Gods is both a blessing and a curse. Don't hide your talents in your own little circle of friends. There are plenty of Wiccans out there who could use your help. Be there for them when they are in need.

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Lark is a Third Degree Initiate of the Oak, Ash, and Thorn Tradition of American Eclectic Wicca, and High Priestess of Tangled Moon Coven. She has been a Pagan all her life (at least her Mother always said she was a little Heathen!), and practicing the Craft for seven years. She holds a BS in nursing and a MS in counseling. She served in the US Army for 20 years, including Vietnam.

² **Editor's note:** Since this was written in 1997, the Cherry Hill Wiccan Seminary (<http://www.cherryhillseminary.org/>) has opened its doors.

She and her husband (and High Priest) live on 65 acres of land, which they are holding in trust from the Earth as a nature preserve and Pagan retreat. They share their home with two Irish wolfhounds, a beagle, and 15 cats (most rescued from the side of the road. Lark can be reached via e-mail at blakek@usit.net



Reviews

By John M. Morris, Ph.D.

JOHN MICHAEL GREER. *THE NEW ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE OCCULT*. ST. PAUL (MN): LLEWELLYN WORLDWIDE, 2003. 555 PP., \$29.95.

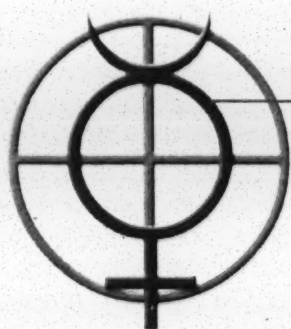
This hefty volume covers a somewhat wider range than other reference books we've reviewed here. Unlike Raven Grimassi's *Encyclopedia of Wicca & Witchcraft* or Rosemary Ellen Guiley's *The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft*, Greer's brand-new Encyclopedia paints with a much broader brush, covering topics ranging from Egyptian occultism to the Order of the Eastern Star, a Masonic tradition. Surprisingly, Greer doesn't skimp in his coverage, and he often goes more deeply into his topics than either of these two earlier volumes. On the other hand, he has chosen to omit biographies of current occultists, of the sort that tend to overload the pages of the two predecessor volumes. He limits his coverage to Western Europe and North America.

The biographies of historical figures, however, are most informative. For instance, four pages are devoted to Plato and Platonism, topics that are ignored in the two earlier volumes. On an assignment from a coven leader, I looked for references to the pentacle and the pentagram in each of these encyclopedias. As the Pagans' best-known sacred symbol, the pentacle was mentioned in all three volumes. Grimassi described it briefly, but said little about its history. Guiley gave a full page to a discussion of the pentacle and pentagram. But Greer devotes two pages to them, including a reference to the Ritual of the Pentagram, in a discussion that I found more informative than either of the others.

I've also been pouring over material on Aleister Crowley, a central figure in Twentieth Century occult history. Here, again, Greer's new book was most satisfactory, giving a brief, but balanced, two-page discussion of the Great Beast. Guiley also devotes two pages to Crowley in a helpful biography. Grimassi gives us a one-page biography, which tends to be rather sketchy. Once again, Greer's *Encyclopedia* was most satisfactory.

If you're like me, you have bookshelves filled with encyclopedias, and you may enjoy leafing through them as much as I do. In this case, Greer's new volume will be a pleasurable addition to your collection.

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In the News

with Dave Burwasser

Bush Foot-In-Mouth Faith Bureaucrat Slurs Pagans

It seems we lack "loving hearts"

Asked in an online chat November 26th by a Pagan Unity Campaign (PUC) staffer if Pagan groups should enjoy the same consideration for Federal funds as other religions, the Director of the White House's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (FBCI) replied:

"I haven't run into a pagan faith-based group yet, much less a pagan group that cares for the poor! Once you make it clear to any applicant that public money must go to public purposes and can't be used to promote ideology, the fringe groups lose interest. Helping the poor is tough work, and only those with loving hearts seem drawn to it."

H James Towey's remarks triggered a tidal wave of protest nationwide, giving examples of Pagan charitable works and demanding an apology.

According to Washington Post coverage of Internet chat rooms, Pagans support a Chicago battered women's shelter and have donated \$20,000 in Massachusetts for children with AIDS. The West Los Angeles Pagan community gathers food and personal care

items for the homeless at each of eight annual Sabbats.

Outstandingly the Pagan Pride Project, headquartered in Indianapolis, has collected 74,000 pounds of food and donated \$51,000 to homeless shelters, inter-faith food banks, the Red Cross and other charities in the past three years. Food drives during Pagan Pride days, which are held all over the country, are especially common.

Ginger Strivelli, National President of the PUC, issued a press release from Weaverville, NC, demanding from Towey a retraction and apology, as well as a statement *"for the record that any Pagan groups applying for FBCI funding will be treated with the same respect and in the same manner as the more mainstreamed religions with which you work."* Rev. Mia Reeves-Sykes, PUC state representative in Maryland, pointed out in a press release that Pagans are far less inclined to *"promote ideology"* than Towey's usual clientele.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State were all over Towey like a bad suit, referring to him as the *"Faith Czar"*. Executive Director Barry W. Lynn asked for an apology to the Pagan community and reaffirmation of Towey's support for the principle that government will treat all religions equally. He went on:

"Your reply [...] implies that the Bush administration intends to discriminate against certain faith-groups from the outset. This is a curious stand for you to take, as you have repeatedly insisted that the administration will not play favorites among religious groups under the faith-based initiative."

Lynn charged that Towey and other administration officials have misled the American people by claiming that the faith-based initiative will be open to all religious groups but then asserting that certain groups will be summarily denied funding. He concluded:

"This incident demonstrates once again that the 'faith-based' initiative is a bad idea. When government tries to fund religious ministries, constitutional problems are inevitable."

Claire Buchan, deputy White House press secretary, returned calls for comment to Towey's office by Washington Post reporter Alan Cooperman:

"The President believes that the faith-based initiative is an important initiative that is not about religion but is about results. Mr. Towey did not intend to convey any ill will toward anyone."

(For the record: Ms. Buchan's remarks about results, not religion, represent the final, complete reversal of the original Faith-Based Initiative intent, which began as definitely about religion -- specifically Christianity -- as purportedly the only real source of results for the

poor. Bush has been drifting away from that for three years, and Pagans can take some pride as helping drive the final stake into the heart of that original, misbegotten concept behind FBCI.)

The furor sparked Pagan community self-evaluation, including attorney Shea Thomas of Hyattsville, MD, chair of the nonprofit Open Hearth Foundation, which raises funds to build a pagan community center in the Washington area; and *The Seeker Journal's* own Cather Steincamp of Richmond, VA.

As the examples above mostly illustrate, Pagan charity is very local and grass-roots rather than institutional and bricks-&-mortar. This arises from the nature of Pagan institutions.

Contributions gathered at a public Sabbat are quite parallel to passing the collection plate for charity in a church on Sunday morning. Pagans have never sought Federal assistance in that – rightly so, because we would not want the Feds assisting, e.g., the Baptists in the same way. That gets into direct state support for religion.

Towey's error, and prejudice, is to mistake a different institutional format for a different attitude toward the needy. For that, we still are owed an apology, above and beyond Ms. Buchan's tepid assurances of lack of ill intent.

News Editor's Note: The discussion of Pagans and institutions evoked by Towey's blunder is far from the first. The low institutional profile of Paganism arises directly from its primary ritual institution, the coven or the solitary, mostly working out of doors or in someone's living room. We have chosen those formats for the very reasons that make them low-profile institutions. But from time to time some of us are bothered by its results. If, as a community, we want to compete with major-religion institutions for Mr. Towey's funds, we must anchor that effort in the strongest institutions we already have. That would be the organizers of pan-Trad regional seasonal festivals. Some of them are now 25 years old, very good at what they do, and remarkably stable as institutions. We should build on our strengths.

DB

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Zoning Board Stiffs Wiccan Church

The Santa Rosa County, FL, Zoning Board of Adjustments and Appeals rejected the request of the Fire Dance Church of Wicca for a conditional use permit to operate temporarily in a residential area near the small city of Milton, according to a Pensacola News Journal story by Derek Pivnick. Rev William E Livingston, chancellor of the church, promised an appeal and said the decision was a violation of religious freedom.

The rejection was based on the residential nature of the neighborhood in question, with traffic cited as a major concern. However, the crowd of some 200 erupted into applause, and one attendee literally waved a Bible.

Fire Dance has gathered for ceremonies in Livingston's back yard. Neighbors initially thought they were parties. Eventually Livingston found a notice on his front door informing him that he needed a conditional use permit to run a church in a residential neighborhood.

In zoning law, a neighborhood may have a core use (such as residency) that requires no particular permission, and conditional uses (such as parking lots) that require a permit. Churches and other forms of land use dedicated to religion are not uncommon conditional uses in residential neighborhoods, and different communities have different attitudes toward religious use.

In this dispute, opponents quoted for the record insisted that the issue was the residential character of the neighborhood, and Fire Dance attendees were convinced that it was about religion. If the appeal goes forward, a pivotal question may be whether the County has been as hostile to other churches as it was to Fire Dance Church of Wicca. The presence or lack of uniformity in enforcement could be central to whether an appeals court decides it was about residential character or religious bias.

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Judge Orders County To Include Wiccan Invocation

A Federal court has told the Chesterfield County, VA, Board of Supervisors that it cannot bar Wiccan priestess Cindi Simpson from joining the list of clergy who deliver the invocations that open meetings of the board, reports the Associated Press.

US District Court Judge Dennis W. Dohnal ruled that the board had violated Simpson's First and Fourteenth Amendment rights of equal and free expression of her religious beliefs, while allowing Christians to practice theirs, and had transgressed the separation of church and state clauses.

The US Supreme Court has upheld legislative prayer for a governing body, but with limitations that include prohibition of proselytizing and of advancement of any particular religion by "a preference for a particular set of beliefs," Dohnal said.

County Attorney Steven L Micas explicitly violated the latter in writing when he replied to Simpson's initial inquiry, "*Chesterfield's nonsectarian invocations are traditionally made to a divinity that is consistent with the Judeo-Christian tradition,*" as grounds for rejecting her request.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia and Americans United for Separation of Church and State supported Simpson. Micas did not return a phone call seeking comment.

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Around The Girth Of Gaia

Australia: Two elected municipal officials in Casey, Victoria, face possible legal sanction for raising the religion of a Witch who ran for public office in the campaign and entraining local pastors and churches in their attacks on "forces of evil". Australia has new laws against racial and religious vilification. (MELBOURNE HERALD SUN)

Four Corners: A federal judge will determine, pursuant to a murder case, if US law gives pastoral communication with a Native American medicine man the same confidential status as confession in Christian traditions. The Jicarilla Apache Tribe recognizes Robert Cervantes as a medicine man or traditional shaman. At issue are statements made to him by Carlos C Herrera, a member of the Southern Ute Tribe, as was his alleged victim, Brenda Chavez. (DENVER POST)

Congo: The United Nations Children's Fund estimates that 60% or more of the children in its shelters in Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are accused witches. Belief in witchcraft as the source of bad events is rife in Congo and, with grinding poverty and five years of civil war, there are more than enough bad events to go around. Accusations of children -- usually caught in the middle when a parent remarries and puts the child in a new family setting -- are found everywhere in the country and are growing especially in urban areas. (KNIGHT RIDDER)

Scotland: Derek Blackburn complains of religious discrimination against him as a Druid by Glasgow's Shawlands Academy, Scotland's largest multi-racial school. Seeking time off to observe the solstices and the fall equinox, Blackburn was told they would have to be unpaid holidays. "I know other groups have their days of observance paid," he said. His union is pursuing the case. (SUNDAY MAIL)

Finland: The Supreme Administrative Court voted 4-

3 not to register the Free Wiccan Community of Finland as a formally recognized religion, on grounds that neoPaganism has no settled creed, sacred writings or "other foundations considered sacred." The sticking point is that recognized religions have the right to receive religious instruction in public schools according to their beliefs. The Court narrowly upheld a Ministry of Education decision that the amorphous nature of neoPaganism made that impossible to comply with. The three dissenting judges would have found the decision illegally restrictive. Under a new law, religions will henceforth be registered by the National Board of Patents and Registration.

News Editor's Note: Religious instruction in public schools is barred in America under the doctrine of separation of church and state.

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Salem Original Transcripts Get A Fresh, Modern Viewing

The original documents of the 1692 Salem witchcraft trials, some 900 in all, are getting their first transcription since 1938, according to an Associated Press story. That earlier review was done under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration, a New Deal program to provide public sector jobs for the unemployed during the Great Depression.

The new review is motivated by the fact that errors were made in that transcription, that modern methods such as ultraviolet light and digital enhancement can bring out faded writing and other details not spotted 65 years ago, and because some 30 previously unknown documents from the period, such as the Dolliver account below, have been found in area libraries since the five-year project began.

The project has already fleshed out some characters in the drama. Ann Dolliver had been abandoned with her child by a drunken husband in 1683 and thought she had been possessed. She countered by making and damaging wax effigies of her supposed enemies, in accord with a book she'd read. Nine years later, she found herself accused of witchcraft.

All of this is "new" information; heretofore Dolliver has been a name on a list, according to project leader and University of Virginia Professor Benjamin Ray and historian and witch trials expert Richard Trask. Trask is arranging the material in chronological order for the first time, the better to track the ebb and flow of events.

The original documents still exist after more than 310 years because the paper they are written on, unlike the modern product, was made without acid and thus does not erode itself in the presence of atmospheric moisture.

Woven and pressed linen fiber paper can last up to

500 years.

University of Binghamton English professor Bernard Rosenthal discovered in 1998 an inadvertently erroneous transcription of a court date into a book he had written about the Salem trials. That was the inception of the project. It includes experts from around the world with a sharp interest in the subject; Trask and linguist Margo Burns, e.g., descend from accused witches.

The fresh review is likely to raise as many new questions as it provides answers; many papers have been lost and gaps remain in the record.

Moreover, that's the nature of historical research on original documents.

The new transcripts are expected to draw interest because of our enduring fascination with those grim events. Rosenthal calls the trials America's "original sin," countering the myth of a new beginning in this land, impossible to ignore because society-wide failures that permitted the trials to happen is still not understood.

In contrast, historian Elizabeth Llewellyn Barstow regards the Salem trials as part of the European witch craze, because she views New England in the late 17th Century as an outpost of Europe. But that's the sort of viewpoint diversity that makes history interesting and occasionally controversial.

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